

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 1 and 20 are amended to merely clarify the recited subject matter and claims 21-22 are added. New claims 21 and 22 are patentable over the cited prior art because the cited prior art fails to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed invention wherein the master subscriber is allowed to carry out predetermined procedures other than collecting billing information. Claims 1-22 are pending.

Claim 20 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious from Block et al. (US 6,377,938; hereafter "Block") in view of Carlsson et al. (US 6,026,291; hereafter "Carlsson") and further in view of Martin (US 5,765,108) or Jain (US 6,282,274). Applicant traverses the rejection because the cited prior art references, analyzed individually or in combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest all the features recited in the rejected claims. For example, the cited prior art fails to teach or suggest the claimed network element configured to (1) obtain information on at least one subscriber billing group, comprising two or more subscriber billing accounts and, for each subscriber of said subscriber billing group, an identification associated with at least one type of access right to manage accounts, and (2) use the identification to determine the access right of the subscriber among different access rights to manage accounts of the subscriber billing group and to carry out predetermined procedures in or between the accounts of the subscriber billing group, as recited in independent claim 20.

As explained previously, Block merely describes "a group of trunks, subscriber lines, or services can be identified as a single Billing Group (BG). All the features of the real time subscriber billing system, including prepaid deposits and credit limits, can be applied to the BG as a whole in the same way as previously described for a single subscriber." (column 13, lines 56 to 65). However, there is no differentiation between subscribers based on assigned access rights associate with an identification of the access rights.

Moreover, Block teaches that "... there can be one debit or credit account covering multiple subscribers" (column 13, lines 58 to 60) and that "Service group billing permits to charge ... services to a single account (column 14, lines 4 to 9). Thus, Block fails to disclose, teach or suggest that each subscriber has a plurality of billing accounts as required in the claimed invention.

Carlsson fails to remedy this deficiency because Carlsson merely describes " a system which allows a single user to choose between a default subscription account and at least one

other account for call charges” (column 2, lines 3 to 5). Carlsson’s Fig. 1 actually teaches independency between subscriptions, users and terminals (column 2, lines 36 to 37). As a result, Carlsson fails to teach or suggest a billing group; rather, Carlsson merely discloses a plurality of independent records (105, 110, 115 of Fig. 1).

Thus, when the teachings of Block are combined with that of Carlsson, there is no teach or suggestion of claimed formation of a subscriber billing group, the subscriber billing group comprising two or more subscriber billing accounts. As a result, the combined teachings of Block and Carlsson fail to teach or suggest the claimed assignment to each subscriber of the subscriber billing group an identification associated with at least one type of access right, and the indication, on the basis of the access right, different rights to manage accounts of the subscriber billing group and to carry out predetermined procedures in or between the accounts of the subscriber billing group.

Similarly, Martin merely discloses a telecommunications system that enables a company to be able to maintain a degree of control over the usage of the mobile telephones by controlling the duration and total time of telephone calls initiated from the company’s mobile telephones” (column 1, lines 17-19 and 23-24). According to Martin, a look-up table can contain a calling party category code of TCL3 indicating a standard cellular mobile telephone allowing the call to proceed normally (column 7, lines 16 to 18). However, that passage is actually referring to the use of the mobile phone, not how to manage the accounts. In fact, in Martin, there are no access right indicators assigned to employees, in particular there are no such indicators associated with at least one type of access rights.

Martin actually controls the possibility of making telephone calls from a company’s mobile telephones so as to enable such calls only during week day’s or business hours, i.e., are controlled, “... to maintain a large degree of control over the costs incurred by the use of the mobile phones” (column 1, lines 23 to 32). However, Martin is not directed to carrying out predetermined procedures in or between accounts of a subscriber billing group, e.g., enabling an employer to carry out balance transfers between billing accounts within a group, when an employee has used too many minutes.

Similarly, Jain merely discloses selectable billing options for a single communications account. In Jain, a service subscriber may establish a plurality of service accounts and designate to which of these accounts the charge for a particular call is to be billed (column 1, lines 11 to 14). However, Jain fails to disclose, teach or suggest the formation of a subscriber billing group, the subscriber billing group comprising two or more subscriber billing

accounts. Jain clearly states that its inventive concept pertains to a personal billing selection rather than a subscriber billing group wherein each subscriber of subscriber billing group is assigned an identification. Furthermore, Jain fails to teach or suggest indication, based on an access right indicator, of different rights to manage accounts of the subscriber billing group. Moreover, Jain fails to teach or suggest enabling predetermined procedures in or between accounts of a billing group.

Accordingly, a combination of Block, Carlsson and Martin or Jain would merely provide a situation where one subscriber have two or more accounts, and one of these accounts could be charged for business calls and the other of these accounts could be charged for private calls. Block describes "one account covering multiple subscribers ... identified as a single group" (column 13, lines 56 to 65). Carlsson describes "a system which allows a single user to choose between a default subscription account and at least one other account for call charges" (column 2, lines 3 to 5). Figure 1 of Carlsson presents independency between subscriptions, users and terminals (column 2, lines 36 to 37). This means that Carlsson does not present a billing group but a number of independent records (105, 110, 115 of Fig. 1). Thus, the combination of the cited prior art would have failed to teach or suggest identification with an access right and, based on this access right, different rights to manage accounts of billing group and to carry out predetermined procedures in or between the accounts of the subscriber billing group.

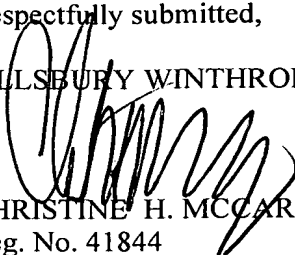
As a result, the claimed invention is patentable over the combined teachings of Block, Carlsson and either Martin or Jain. Accordingly, claim 20 is patentable over the cited prior art.

All objections and rejections having been addressed, Applicant requests issuance of a notice of allowance indicating the allowability of all pending claims. If anything further is necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, Applicant requests that the Examiner contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Please charge any fees associated with the submission of this paper to Deposit Account Number 033975. The Commissioner for Patents is also authorized to credit any over payments to the above-referenced Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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